

**CASSANDRA sees
The Bomb go off**

'LIKE AN OIL PAINTING FROM HELL'

From CASSANDRA

Near Christmas Island, in the Pacific, Saturday.

AT forty-one minutes past ten on the 31st day of May in the Year of Our Lord 1957, in the neighbourhood of Christmas Island, named after Him, the British people exploded their second hydrogen bomb.

IT WAS A DRESS REHEARSAL FOR THE DEATH OF THE WORLD.

Standing on the rolling deck of H.M.S. Alert and clad in white protective clothing with hoods and goggles, we, the observers, looked like grotesque mourners. High overhead, at a height of what was probably eight miles, a Valiant bomber painted all white sped at over 600 miles an hour to the firing point.

In its sleek belly was the bomb known to one and all on Christmas Island as "The Beast," but politely referred to by the scientific director in charge as "a nuclear device."

We were thirty-five miles from where The Beast was due to explode after being spewed out from the bomber—quite near enough in view of the fact that the power of the bomb was equal to several million tons of TNT.

Footsteps...

I waited with feelings of excitement, awe and a faint sense of horror. The ship's loudspeakers broke into an iron, throaty roar as a giant voice began to count downward to Moment Zero.

Forty, thirty-nine, thirty-eight, thirty-seven...

It was like the footsteps that lead to the execution shed. We had our backs turned away from the bursting point...

Eighteen, seventeen, sixteen...

We were invited to cover our closed eyes with our hands. The Beast was plummeting down in a great deadly arc...

Five, four, three, two, one... FIRE! Through closed eyes, through dark glasses and with my hands still covering my face, I saw the flash. Brighter than the sun, hotter than the sun, and ripped out of the secrets of the heart of the Universe.

Still with our backs to the burst, we remained there for another fifteen seconds before we were

allowed to turn round and open our eyes. AND THERE IT HUNG BEFORE US, A BOILING RED AND YELLOW SUN LOW ABOVE THE HORIZON. IT WAS AN OIL PAINTING FROM HELL, BEAUTIFUL AND DREADFUL, MAGNIFICENT AND EVIL.



"I waited with feelings of excitement, awe and a faint sense of horror."

The golden, whirling ball changed colour from orange and grey to a light muddy purple.

It then re-formed and became a bloated top-heavy Christmas pudding, with a greyish, whitish sauce streaming out of the top and spilling down at the sides like a filthy lava.

The shock waves could be seen feathering out in scimitar shape, and the grunt and thump of the blast hit us—not sharply, but as a dingy nudges when it hits the shore.

The men around me were too quiet, and in a blasphemous way it reminded me of the Silence that was once so poignant a memory of Armistice Day on November 11.

We were watching something also

WHAT NOW?

CASSANDRA SUMS UP

THE Russians knew of this megaton explosion within a very short time of its being detonated. So did the Japs—and, doubtless, our American friends weren't completely in the dark.

No doubt, competitive minds and scientific brains will assess what we have done.

SO WHERE DOES IT END?

Having seen one of these appalling rehearsals, I urge that we in

connected with death on a prodigious scale—death, however, that does not lie in the past, but death that is waiting in the future.

The vast shape, now increasing with size every moment, rose upward and turned white with a reddish glow in the interior.

A thin, snakelike stem appeared at its base, as steam and water were sucked up from the sea below.

The horrible pudding in the sky became a diseased cauliflower and then changed into the familiar mushroom.

The After-effects

Mr. W. J. Cook—the brilliant scientific director who is not only the stage manager and producer but also the part-author of this grim and terrifying performance—was at great lengths to emphasise the safety of the nuclear device from the point of view of "fall out."

In his precise and academic manner, he became almost enthusiastic about the odds of anyone in the Pacific and in Australia and Japan and the United States suffering any after-effects from this almost—as it seemed—hygienic weapon.

But, with my hands over my eyes, wrapped from head to foot in protective clothing and wearing a device to detect excessive radiation, I couldn't help thinking of the real power of The Beast.

The flash, crash and roar of the hydrogen bomb set off in the most remote and desolate part of the world is a source of wonderment and, indeed, of pride to some people like Lord Cherwell.

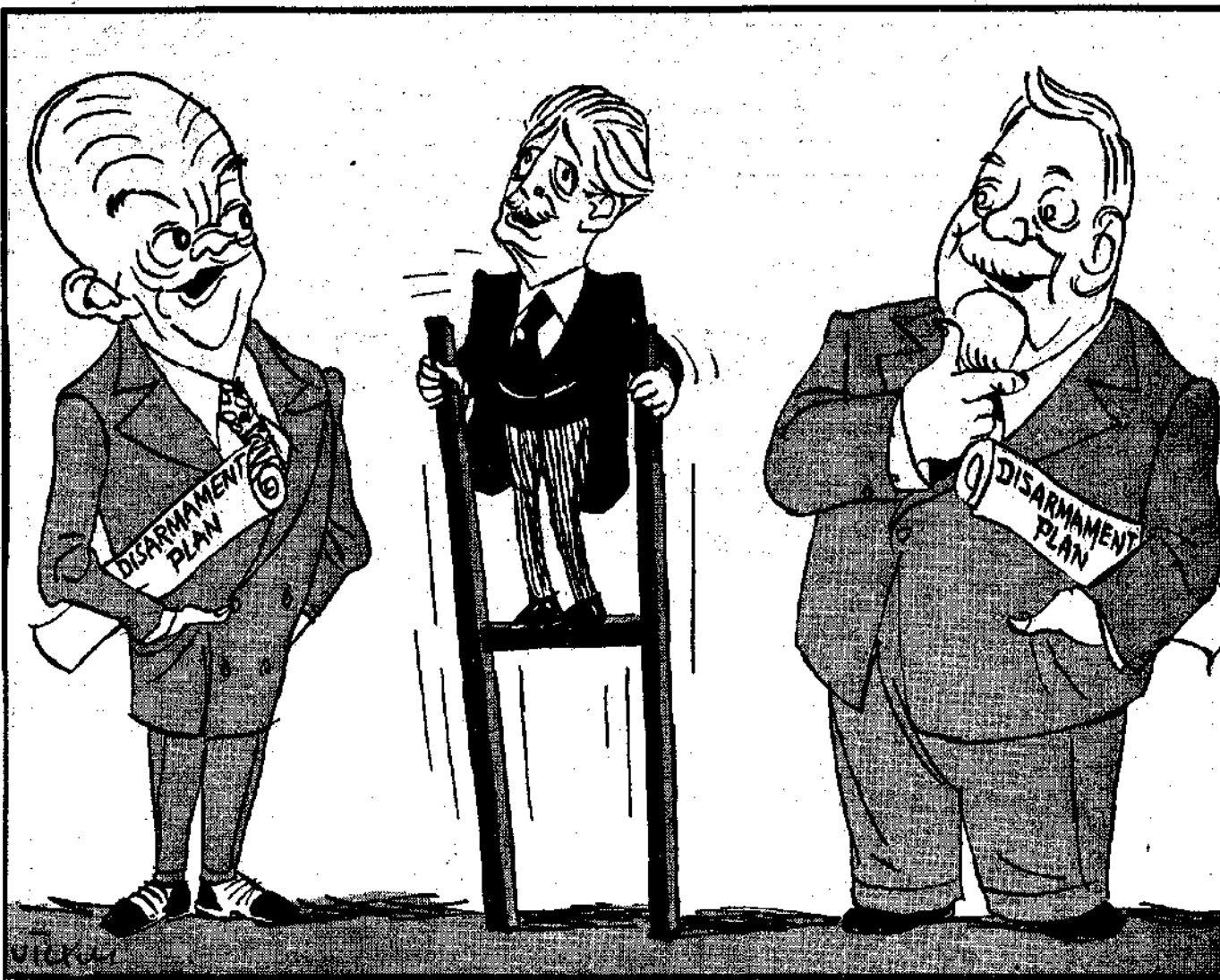
But, when released over cities where it would obliterate millions of men, women and children in a trice, it is a wicked, an evil thing.

Britain should call a halt. We have shown the world—for what it is worth—our military muscles.

Now we should cry "Halt!"

Churchill has called the present H-bomb race a system that produces peace through mutual terror.

But, if it is allowed to continue to expand and to develop, it would produce the kind of mutual peace that comes from the Death of the World.



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